

## CHAPTER 4: COMMUNITY OUTREACH

Outreach to members of the Canal community was crucial to the success of the community-based planning process. It was important that all affected groups (residents, employees, business owners and visitors) were given the opportunity to discuss transportation needs and deficiencies as well as respond to the solutions formulated as a result of the process. The components of the outreach effort included a Stakeholder Committee, community survey and two community workshops. In this chapter, the outreach methodology is described followed by a summary of the input collected during the outreach effort. A more detailed discussion of the outreach conducted for the Canal Neighborhood CBTP can be found in Appendix B (Memorandum #2 – Outreach Plan), Appendix C (Memorandum #3 – Summary of Outreach Efforts for Community Workshop #1) and Appendix F (Memorandum #6 – Summary of Community Workshop #2).

### OUTREACH METHODOLOGY

#### Stakeholder Committee

The Stakeholder Committee was composed of neighborhood residents, business owners, school officials and representatives from community-based organizations. The Committee met five times during the planning process to oversee the preparation of the CBTP. Each document prepared as part of the CBTP was reviewed and revised by the Committee. The Stakeholder Committee meetings included:

- Meeting 1:** Review and comment on Memorandum #1 (Existing Conditions Report) and Memorandum #2 (Outreach Plan)
- Meeting 2:** First community workshop to get public input on transportation gaps in the neighborhood
- Meeting 3:** Discussion of community workshop, possible transportation solutions and priorities for implementation (Memoranda #3 and #4)
- Meeting 4:** Second community workshop to present proposed solutions and solicit community priorities
- Meeting 5:** Review and comment on Draft Plan

#### Community Survey

In January and February 2006, the Marin Grassroots Leadership Network conducted a survey of Canal residents and friends of the Canal concerning transportation issues. The survey asked three questions:

1. What difficulties have you experienced traveling around the Canal Neighborhood?
2. What difficulties have you experienced getting to places outside the Canal Neighborhood?
3. What is the one thing that you would like to see changed in the transportation infrastructure in the Canal Neighborhood?

Surveys were distributed in English, Spanish and Vietnamese to local organizations and handed out at bus stops in the Canal Neighborhood and other locations in San Rafael. In addition, surveys were sent by email to almost 200 community groups and individuals. More than one hundred surveys were returned including 75 Spanish, 16 English, and 13 Vietnamese. The survey results are summarized in Appendix G. The concerns raised in the surveys are included in the discussion of Key Issues below.

## Community Workshops

Two community workshops were conducted in the Canal Neighborhood as part of the community transportation planning process. The first workshop was held early in the schedule (February 2006) to identify transportation gaps and potential solutions. The second workshop was held in July 2006; at this workshop, solutions were presented to address the previously identified transportation gaps. Both workshops were conducted in an open house format to allow participants some flexibility as to when and how long to attend. It was felt that the open house format would be a better fit with attendees' busy schedules and would allow a more personal approach to collecting community opinion. Display materials were prepared in English, Spanish and Vietnamese to accommodate the predominant languages spoken within the community. In addition, many of the workshop facilitators were bi-lingual.

**Outreach** - A community workshop can be a very effective tool to share information but only if attendance reflects a representative cross-section of the community. To ensure a good turnout, it was important to advertise the workshops extensively. A workshop flyer including project fact sheet was the primary instrument used for outreach. Examples of these materials are included in Appendix C (Memorandum #3 – Summary of Outreach Efforts for Community Workshop #1) and Appendix F (Memorandum #6 – Summary of Community Workshop #2). Many strategies were used to inform the community of the community transportation plan and solicit attendance at the workshop including:

- Presentations to community organizations – Presentations were made to community organizations on the purpose of the Plan and upcoming workshops.
- Flyers to community groups – Flyers were given to community groups for distribution to their members.
- Flyers at community events – To reach community members that do not usually attend meeting or join organizations, flyers were distributed at community events such as 4<sup>th</sup> Street Farmers Market, Opening of the Pickleweed Community Center and Marin County Fair.
- Flyers posted at community locations – Flyers were posted at community meeting places, ESL classes, stores and businesses in the Canal Neighborhood and locations outside the Canal which are frequented by residents of the Canal.
- Previous meeting attendees – Flyers were mailed/emailed to attendees of previous transportation-related public meetings.
- Stakeholder Committee – Flyers were given to members of the Stakeholder Committee for distribution to friends and neighbors.
- Businesses – Flyers were mailed to businesses in the Canal Neighborhood.
- Phone call/email reminders – The last week before the workshops, phone call and email reminders were made to the Stakeholder Committee, previous meeting attendees and various members of the community.
- Media – Press packets were sent to various media contacts including the *Marin Independent Journal*, *Pacific Sun*, *San Francisco Chronicle*, *El Vocero* and *Newspaper Impulso*. Articles about the CBTP appeared in the *Marin Independent Journal*, *Newspaper Impulso* and the *San Rafael Business*. In addition, the second workshop was announced on the *Nuestros Niños* Radio Program

**Topics of discussion** - Specific topics of discussion for the workshops were developed through input from the Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) and Stakeholder Committee. In meeting the goals of the community-based transportation planning effort, it was important to focus the discussion on factors related to improving mobility for residents of the Canal Neighborhood. Some items of discussion included:

- How do you and your family currently travel to work, school, errands and recreation?
- What events or activities would you take part in but are not able to because of the lack of adequate transportation?
- What services and facilities do you and your family require that are not currently available in or in close proximity to the neighborhood?
- Of all the transportation options available to you and your family, what is the most commonly used?

**Community Workshop #1** – As previously mentioned, an open house format was used for the first Canal Transportation Plan community workshop held on Thursday, February 2, 2006 from 5:30 – 8:30 PM at the Canal Welcome Center. More than 60 residents and interested parties attended. The Open House consisted of five stations. In addition, several displays were available to inform attendees on the status of the Cal Park Hill Tunnel Rehabilitation and Multi-Use Path Construction project, Highway 101 Carpool Lane Gap Closure project and Sonoma-Marin Rail project. A more detailed discussion of Community Workshop #1, copies of workshop materials, and a listing of the comments from the workshop are included in Appendix D (Memorandum #4 – Summary of Transportation Gaps and Potential Solutions). The five stations included:

- **Station 1** – At the first station, participants were welcomed to the workshop, asked to sign-in and given a fact sheet explaining the community-based transportation planning process and the goals of the workshop. A slideshow was running in the background with pictures of the Canal neighborhood and examples of transportation improvements made in similar communities.
- **Station 2** – At Station 2, findings from previous studies were presented on large wall hangings. Participants were given several dots and asked to place these on issues most important to them in traveling in and out of the neighborhood. The issues were divided by mode (i.e. pedestrian, bicycle, transit and motorist).
- **Station 3** – Participants were asked to identify the ‘hot spots’ or problems encountered while traveling within the Canal neighborhood. Four wall maps were provided, one for each mode to allow participants to place dots at locations where they experience difficulties in walking, bicycling, driving and/or taking transit. Bilingual workshop monitors were on hand to solicit specific details about the traveling problems and to record comments.
- **Station 4** – Station 4 was used to record specifics about traveling outside the Canal. Attendees were asked to place dots at locations where it is difficult for them to travel to. Further descriptions of each difficulty were recorded by workshop monitors.
- **Station 5** – At Station 5, participants were thanked for attending and were provided with materials on other transportation-related projects and programs, and upcoming meetings such as the Marin County Transit District’s public meetings on the *Short Range Transit Plan*.

**Community Workshop #2** – The second Canal Transportation Plan Open House was held on July 20, 2006 from 6:00 – 8:00 PM at the recently-reopened Pickleweed Community Center, a facility within the core of the neighborhood. The open house format was again used to allow participants flexibility in when and how long to attend the event. Attendees were encouraged to take their time in reviewing the presented

transportation solutions. Children were invited to join their parents and share their input, and to participate in a special transportation-related arts & crafts project. 13 proposed solutions were presented. Display boards of each were prepared in English and Spanish. Staff from the Transportation Authority of Marin, City of San Rafael, and Wilbur Smith Associates as well as members of the Stakeholder Committee were present to answer questions, facilitate discussion, record comments and provide translation assistance, as needed, in Spanish and Vietnamese. More than 100 residents and interested parties attended the Open House. A more detailed discussion of Community Workshop #2 and listing of the comments received are included in Appendix F (Memorandum #6 – Summary of Community Workshop #2).

The Open House was organized into five primary stations. In addition, several current transportation and neighborhood projects and programs were displayed including the City's Medway Streetscape Improvements, Cal Park Hill Tunnel Rehabilitation, Highway 101 Carpool Lane Gap Closure project, Sonoma-Marin Area Rail Transit project, and Golden Gate Transit Rider's Guides. An arts & crafts activity table for children was hosted by the Marin County Bicycle Coalition. The five stations included:

**Welcome Station** – As they entered the meeting room, participants were welcomed to the workshop, asked to register and handed a 'fact sheet' that included a brief overview of the community-based planning process and listing of the 13 draft solutions being presented at the Open House. A video was also running in the background welcoming visitors in English, Spanish, and Vietnamese to the Open House; the video was narrated by members of the Stakeholder's Committee and produced by the Marin County Grassroots Leadership Network.

**Station 1** – The first set of proposed solutions focused on issues related to traveling within the Canal Neighborhood and addressed the difficulties experienced when walking and bicycling in the neighborhood. The solutions included capital improvement projects and education programs to improve safety and access. They are:

- Bahia Vista Safe Routes to School/*Rutas Seguras a la Escuela Bahía Vista*
- Crosswalk and Lighting Improvements/*Cruces Peatonales y Farolas*
- Safety and Streetscape Improvements/*Mejoramientos de Seguro y Estética de las calles*
- 'Street Smarts' Program/*Programa de 'Street Smarts'*
- Canalfont Paseo

**Station 2** - The focus of Station 2 was to address the barriers faced by residents in their attempt to travel beyond the Canal neighborhood. The potential solutions presented to overcome these barriers included bridging physical gaps that impede travel, providing supplemental transportation for areas not served by transit and providing transportation information.

- Canal Crossing/*Cruce del Canal*
- Rides to School for Parents/*Programa Rides to School para Padres*
- Informational Kiosk/*Kiosko Informativo*
- Highway Crossing/*Cruce de Autopista*
- Car Sharing Program/*Programa de Car Share*

**Station 3** - At Station 3, draft solutions to address the quality of transit service affecting Canal residents were presented. The identified solutions centered on increasing the convenience and affordability of transit use and providing more reliable transit service to Canal residents, who rely on transit as their primary means of transportation. In addition, comments were solicited about Golden Gate Transit service. The draft solutions included:

- Adjustments to Bus Transit Service/*Ajustos al Servicio de Tránsito*
- More and Bigger Bus Shelters/*Adicionales y mas grandes marquesinas*
- Modified Transit Fare/*Tarifas de Autobús Reducidas*

**Prioritization Station** – Attendees were thanked for their participation in the Open House and were given dots (three green dots for the projects thought to be of the highest priority and three red dots for projects thought to be of the lowest priority). Participants were asked to place these dots on the solutions they most wanted or least wanted to see realized in the neighborhood. Input from this prioritization exercise and that collected during previous community outreach was used to gauge public support of the projects for the prioritization of transportation solutions in Chapter 5. The results of the prioritization survey are included in Appendix F (Memorandum #6 – Summary of Community Workshop #2).

## KEY ISSUES AND HIGHLIGHTS OF PUBLIC OUTREACH

After reviewing the comments received at Stakeholder Committee meetings, at public workshops and through the community survey, it became apparent that many of the transportation issues being raised today were brought up during in previous planning studies. These same issues continue to be of concern for Canal residents. The transportation gaps can be categorized by limitations to:

### ***Transit access from Canal Neighborhood to other locations in San Rafael, Marin County and the Bay Area***

Transit continues to be a barrier to Canal residents. Although Golden Gate Transit routes 35 and 36 serving the Canal have the highest ridership of all routes in the local transit system, residents feel that service is not frequent enough. As a result, buses are very crowded and often do not run on schedule. In addition, existing schedules do not offer adequate service in the early morning and late evening hours, and do not provide convenient service to essential destinations. The most frequently mentioned underserved locations included San Pedro Elementary School (for parents), College of Marin and Mill Valley. Residents also feel that bus service is costly particularly for the short trip to downtown San Rafael and that it would be helpful to have more drivers who can speak Spanish to communicate more easily with many of the passengers. There were also safety concerns about waiting at bus stops, especially at night.

### ***Access to locations immediately surrounding the Canal Neighborhood***

The canal and highways create barriers between the Canal Neighborhood and other areas of San Rafael. As a result, travel to locations outside the Canal can be circuitous and heavily congested. Francisco Blvd East and Bellam Boulevard were especially unfriendly to walking and bicycling. The heavy traffic, fast travel speeds, narrow sidewalks, narrow travel lanes and infrequent bus stops make it unattractive and difficult for travel by pedestrians, bicyclists, transit riders and motorists alike. Downtown, Montecito Shopping Center, San Rafael High School, San Pedro Elementary School, and Marin Square were most often noted as difficult to access by walking or bicycling.

### ***Difficulties for pedestrian and bicycle travel within the Canal Neighborhood***

Walking in the neighborhood was a concern for many residents. Narrow sidewalks, obstructions on sidewalks, lack of curb ramps, and the challenge of crossing at intersections were all cited. There was general concern about the speed with which drivers travel on neighborhood streets, the lack of attention by drivers to stop signs, failure of motorists to yield to pedestrians, and the lack of street lighting at night especially for pedestrians, bicyclists, children exiting school buses and others waiting at bus stops. It was recommended that additional crosswalks and stop signs were needed.

## Summary of Public Comments

Specific comments about transportation received from the public are summarized below. These are organized by mode of travel.

Regarding travel by **TRANSIT**, specific concerns include:

- It is expensive to travel from the Canal to Downtown, especially for the short distance
- Buses are often filled to capacity
- Transit service is not frequent enough
- Transit service is not adequate during the early morning or late evening hours
- Buses do not run on time
- There is no public transit to San Pedro Elementary School and parents find it difficult to get to the school for conferences and events
- School bus stops are located on busy streets and school buses block other traffic especially transit buses
- Bus drivers are not always courteous or respectful to patrons
- No bus service is available in the area south of Kerner Blvd
- Bus stops on Francisco Blvd East are too widely spaced
- Transit service to Northgate is not convenient especially on weekends
- It is difficult take transit to Kaiser Terra Linda, College of Marin, Mill Valley, Marin General and Sleepy Hollow
- Bicycle racks on the buses are often full
- San Rafael High School students taking public transit to school say that it is often very crowded and drivers do not stop long enough for students to exit
- Many bus stops do not have seating

**PEDESTRIANS** in the Canal Neighborhood are concerned that:

- Cars do not stop at stop signs or yield to pedestrians
- Cars speed on Canal Street and other residential streets in the neighborhood
- Many streets are difficult to cross at intersections (no crosswalks), especially on Bellam Blvd, Kerner Blvd, Medway St and Canal St
- Specifically, it was felt that the intersections at Larkspur St/Kerner Blvd and Canal St/Medway St were difficult to navigate, especially at night
- Sidewalks are too narrow; widths are further blocked by vegetation and poles
- Many intersections are missing curb ramps
- Many feel unsafe when crossing from apartments to the bowling alley
- Pedestrians do not feel safe walking along Francisco Blvd East and along Bellam Blvd to Marin Square

- There is little landscaping, especially street trees, on Francisco Blvd
- It was frequently noted that pedestrians do not feel safe walking to San Rafael High School, the Montecito Shopping Center and other locations north of the Canal waterway
- Cars do not yield to blinking red lights on school buses
- It was often mentioned that it would be nice be able to walk along the Canal
- Pedestrians would like to know how much time there is to cross the street especially at busy signalized intersections
- Pedestrians, cyclists and people waiting for buses are concerned for their personal safety at night

**BICYCLE** travel in the Canal Neighborhood is difficult because:

- Bicyclists feel unsafe riding from the Canal Neighborhood to Andersen Drive and along Francisco Blvd East
- Some bicyclists do not follow the rules of the road especially about using crosswalks and sidewalks
- There is a lack of bicycle parking
- Much of the bicycle network has not yet been implemented
- It is difficult to bicycle to Montecito Shopping Center

**DRIVERS** in the neighborhood are concerned that:

- Pedestrians jay walk and they are difficult to see especially at night!
- There isn't enough parking
- Residents who do not read English often do not understand street sweeping and other parking control signs (tow away)
- Double parked vehicles block the roadways
- Kerner Blvd is very congested especially during evening peak hours
- It is difficult to make left turns onto Bellam Blvd and Canal St
- Many drivers speed on residential streets
- Traffic on Francisco Blvd East is very congested during morning peak especially at Grand Ave Bridge
- Entrance to the post office on Bellam Blvd is dangerous